Mandatory Team Bonding

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by noranite

Summary

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Invisigal raised her hand. “Question.”

Robert sighed. “Can it wait until after? You need to know this stuff for this meeting.” He fiddled with the pointer finger, trying to gesture that he would like to keep talking.

Invisigal’s hand slapped down onto herself. “Yeah. I actually don’t fucking care. I just wanted to know if there’s a way to skip this? Because I really… really don’t care.”

A smirk formed on Robert’s face. “Sure. You’d have to sit with Blazer and help her with paperwork though. A lot of it.” He watched her think about her decision, before shuffling to look more like she was listening to what he was saying. “Where was I?”

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Notes

hi guys guess whos back (its me)
please forgive author if theres bad sentences, authors mind has been riddled with fuzziness and pre-sickness

anyway enjoy dispatch mario kart fic

See the end of the work for more notes

“Are you fucking serious?”

The question, like most questions said from Robert’s mouth, was more like a statement. His eyebrows were furrowed and his face had the look of a middle school girl who just got in trouble and now has to pay the consequences that she knew were going to happen. He was hoping it was a joke. But Blonde Blazer just nodded.

Robert leaned back against the chair across from Blazer’s office. He sighed, shaking his head. Blazer looked polite but stern at the same time, a look only a manager could master. There was a slight crease of a smile in her face, and Robert took one look at it before looking away.

“You want me to do a bonding activity with a bunch of criminals who hate me? Sure. That’ll go well.” He tossed sarcastically, rolling his eyes and crossing his leg over his knee. He heard a slight chuckle from Blazer.

“I know, but it could probably be a good thing in the long run. Y’know, make some memories.” She offered, her face twisting in a look of ‘I know that was cringe but please just work with me here.’ The smile showed all of that.

Robert raised an eyebrow. “Make some memories? God forbid.” He moved to stand up, placing his hands on the armrests and uncrossing his legs, but then Blazer spoke up again.

“They need you, Robert. They just don’t know that yet.” She paused, looking into his eyes like she was going to lose her mind if he didn’t say yes. “All I’m asking for is just a couple of hours to reel them in, learn a bit about them. Talk outside of work.”

It made Robert hesitate. It would probably help him to observe their skills, put them into action in the team maybe. It definitely wasn’t a bad idea for anyone besides Robert, he had to give Blazer credit for that.

He sat back down. “Fine. Once. Just don’t make me hang out with them even more than I have to.”

Blonde Blazer smiled. “Great! I came up with a list of activities that might peak their interests, so go ahead and just read through that.” A paper was slid towards him. This girl definitely had a thing for papers.

Robert picked it up. It was titled ‘Activity List’ in a pastel bubbly font, and had little borders with clouds and stuff on it. Robert snickered. She really took the time to make it look pretty? Loser. (Lovingly.) He read through the options. *Petting zoo.* Definitely not. *Ice skating.* God no. *Movies.* Would rather die. He read through the all the options, some highlighted in different colours, which took a little thinking to realise they were coded to specific Z-Team members.

He reached the bottom of the list and placed it on Blazer’s desk. “All of these sound shit. No offence.” Blazer didn’t look hurt at it. She just turned the paper over.

“Not even the ones I wrote for you?”

Robert’s face flushed in embarrassment, he didn’t check the back. He pulled it towards him again and skimmed through the options under a little column written in pencil titled ‘Robert’. Now these were some activities he liked. *Arcade.* Easily. *Museum.* Absolutely. But there was one on there that surprised him, not because it was on there, but because it wasn’t on the one for the rest of the team.

“Video games?” Robert questioned. “They don’t like video games?”

Blazer tossed her head from side to side, shrugging with it. “Eh… I kinda assumed they were too busy being criminals.”

Robert huffed a laugh. Video games sounded like a good idea. They didn’t have to go anywhere, hell they could stay in the office and play. It was something Robert was good at. He was introduced to the concept of video games at a young age, meaning he styled his upbringing on artificial worlds where he could be whoever he wanted to be.

When Robert's father brought home a Gameboy, the first console that Robert would own, to teach his son about technology, I swear to god that family did not see their son for weeks. He would spend hours with his Gameboy, taking it everywhere and learning everything about all the games he had. It felt like a lost memory now. An artifact, almost.

Robert considered video games as something he grew out of, as he matured and realised he couldn't put all his time and effort into fake realities when he should be putting them in the real world. But maybe this was a chance to bring himself back there, and others. Back to the joy of endless possibilities, worlds that made no real life sense but somehow explained everything.

Or if you were Robert, letting his team beat him at Mario Kart so they could feel good about themselves.

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On the day of their "very important, must attend, attendance is mandatory" meeting, one of SDN's meeting rooms was booked out for 2 hours under the excuse "Team bonding". Something that was never talked about before, but now Blazer was keen on saying it's important.

Robert had come prepared. He had a pointer finger and a projector set up. He moved the meeting room desk far away and set up bean bags and cushions on the floor in front of it. He knew the Z-Team hated him, but he wasn't trying to make this not fun for any of them.

Prior to this, he had begged Blonde Blazer to get a Nintendo Switch for every member of the Z-Team and himself, and she agreed only when Robert said she could use it as a tax write off. So 8 Nintendo Switches were set up across the floor.

It had taken Robert ages to figure out how to work the damn console again, which was weird because he had one of his own that Chase bought him. A blue Switch Lite. But that sat collecting dust while Robert grieved the man that started all this for him anyway.

He spent a couple of hours figuring out how HDMI cables and Switch Online worked, setting up the most elaborate explanation to make sure every one of the idiots on his team knew what they were doing.

He wasn't going to let them fail at video games too.

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Robert continued to point and explain about the Nintendo Switch, flicking through a slideshow and then talking about Mario Kart. Not history or anything, just what the team needed to know.

"Now," Robert said at the end of his slideshow. "Today's meeting is actually a team bonding activity." Groans erupted throughout the room. "Which means we're gonna play Mario Kart and I'll let you fuckers kick my virtual shit in." Smiles lit up the room. Robert couldn't blame them. He was their boss after all.

When that was all done, after the few questions were answered, the team begrudgingly took their places with the consoles. Robert pulled his Switch Lite out of his bag and smiled at it. It was a little bit dusty. Robert could see his reflection in the screen, and caught his smile. He dropped it. He had to contain his excitement to play video games guilt free.

The group settled into the bean bags and cushions, Malevola and Sonar sitting next to each other and sorting through the characters, pointing ones they liked out to each other. He heard laughs and Sonar blatantly insult most of the characters, which wasn't a bad sign. Punch Up and Coupé also opted to stay nearby to each other, picking out the best combinations for their kart setup.

Robert leaned against the meeting table he had pushed away, far enough from the group to not disturb them but close enough where he could still hear everything happening and still feel included. He powered on the Switch and dusting off the screen. He opened Mario Kart and loaded himself into the lobby, his little Mii character running onto the lobby. He saw Malevola turn and look at him when she saw his little Mii, and a small, teasing laugh from her. Robert couldn't help but smile back.

"Alright guys, let's play some games."

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The first race was mostly uneventful, no real malice yet. Everyone was learning the controls and figuring out how to drive, and roasting everyone else's character choices.

Robert had opted to play as Metal Mario, as he felt like it closely resembled his superhero self while also being just a character. Besides, he looked and sounded awesome. Although he was a heavy weight character, Robert didn't really care for the things that were 'meta' or OP. Just for vibes.

Sonar had picked Dry Bones, a skeleton version of the humble Koopa Troopa. Sonar liked the way his head spun when he got picked, and his overall look and feel. It was a less common character you see being played, which was one of the reasons Sonar was drawn to him. Dry Bones looked like a good person but just with a bad curse, almost like he was too.

Flambae, however, didn't care about the psychology of the character he picked and immediately chose the one character that looked like it was made of lava. Dry Bowser. Sonar had mocked him for being a copycat, which got a gentle punch from Flambae, but in Flambae's heart he picked it because he thought the point was to pick the person who resembled you the most. Also his design was cool.

Invisigal decided she didn't care for any of these characters and made her own special Mii character that looked like her. There was no person like yourself after all. When she informed the group of her decision she was met with groans and complaints about her being boring, which she yelled back that they were all just unoriginal haters.

Coupé and Prism actually fought over the characters they chose. Not physical, surprisingly, but just a verbal argument about who should play as Princess Rosalina, a blonde space princess with a soothing voice. Coupé wanted to play her because of her mysterious nature, and Prism wanted to play her because all the other girls looked half the amount of cool. Coupé actually won this argument, and Prism reluctantly picked Birdo, a pink creature with a big bow in its hair.

Golem was silent in his choosings, wanting to find the character that represented him the most. In the end, he picked Shy Guy, as he felt that that was what he was in his heart. When he found out he could change the colour of Shy Guy, he thought extra hard for a couple more minutes before picking the yellow version of Shy Guy, because Golem believed that yellow was the closest colour to happiness. And everyone agreed with this choice.

Punch Up chose Donkey Kong. As soon as he saw the big guy, massive muscles and the body of a titan, he instantly looked at Coupé and told her about this choice. She nodded immediately, and Punch Up laughed excitedly about this. Coupé then decided to tell him that there was another character called Funky Kong, which was the same as Donkey Kong except with cool sunglasses. Punch Up stared at her like she had just told him his wife died. She then giggled. "But Donkey Kong is cool." She teased.

Malevola was struggling with picking her character. There were so many good options, but none of them felt like her. Until she flicked down to a character who wasn't part of the Mario universe but was from the Splatoon part of Nintendo. Inkling Girl. Malevola's heart was sold. She was so excited about this character that Sonar couldn't even come up with a roast for it because it just fit her so well.

When the first race was done, that's when shit started getting heated. The Z-Team were learning strategies to fuck over everyone else in the race, and everyone was ganging up on Robert. In the second race, Flambae got the fire flower item, accurately hitting everyone in front of him and behind him and laughing maniacally. That got a lot of curses and threats towards him, but none of them took it seriously.

At some point, Robert was in 1st place.

"He's in first! Get him!" He heard Invisigal yell, before the onslaught of red shells and green shells and anything to knock Robert's placing. He was laughing the entire time, trying his best to stay in first. The entire team was out for him virtually, and they were all smiling and telling Robert to hit the brakes.

Sonar reached behind his shoulder and tried to turn Robert's Switch off, which got a light hearted kick and a laugh from him. "Eyes on the road, dickhead!" He yelled, moving his switch out of reach from the bat. Eventually, Robert got knocked back to second and then to third and everyone cheered, which made Robert smile. They were having fun.

Robert was watching them all interact with each other, weak insults and fake anger being tossed between each other. They were teaching each other how to do shortcuts, how to do boosts and tricks, and for a couple of races Robert just watched them and observed.

Some of their skills were showing. Invisigal was pretty peaceful on her own, Sonar was trying to use physics to determine when he should drift. Golem was following instructions (the arrows that pointed him on track). Robert made a note of how each other them played, and how he could use those skills on missions.

It was like training, almost. If you thought hard enough, they were actually doing work, just differently. Robert felt proud of himself. He did something for them, that didn't get him punched or something.

"You joining?", Prism asked. She was looking at Robert but he still felt the need to point to himself. "Yeah, you. You can't just sit and watch us, we gotta beat your ass." She smiled, half teasing. Robert chuckled and picked up his Switch again.

“Alright, but I’m not going easy on you fucks this time.”

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Time seemed to fly by, indulged in the fun and humour of the game. No one even bothered to check the time, or to see how much time in the meeting room they had left, until there was a knock at the door. It was Blonde Blazer. She opened the door after a couple of seconds of no response, just staring at the group playing Mario Kart. Robert had ended up squished between the bean bags of Invisigal and Punch Up, yelling about falling off the map and getting teasing laughs from everyone.

She leaned against the door and just watched, until everyone had finished that one race. She knew it was over when Flambae put his hands in the air in victory and exclaimed. He punched the air for a bit as the others sarcastically congratulated him.

“Alright party people, back to work.” She finally said, grabbing the attention of most of the crew. That’s when they decided to check the time, only to find out they were 15 minutes past their scheduled time slot. Robert smiled at her and stood up from his squished position in between chairs, acknowledging that it was time to pack up.

The others, however, didn’t. “You sure you don’t wanna play?” Prism asked, trying to get just a little more video game time. Blazer seemed to hesitate for a brief moment before shaking her head.

“No thank you,” she smiled. “We’re already running overtime.” She turned on her heels and left. The group decided they should probably be responsible adults and help pack up the room.

The beanbags were piled into a corner, the meeting table and chairs returned to their correct positions. The Switches were put into cases with their names written on them. Everything was returned back to the way it was. Except, that the team had become a little bit closer than before.

Throughout the pack up and exit out of the room there was silence, until Invisigal eventually broke it with a question.

“We can all agree that Blazer would play as Princess Peach, right?”

The team burst into agreement, all offering different sentences that wholeheartedly agreed with that. She fit the appearance description of her perfectly. Bright blonde hair and piercing blue eyes.

Robert laughed gently. “Oh yeah. Absolutely.”

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“How was it?” Blazer’s voice was soft and sweet, like usual. She had pulled Robert into her office again to talk about the activity. “You guys looked like you were having fun.” She was writing something down but Robert didn’t care to ask about it. She gave him a look that conveyed a ‘Let’s talk about it.’ message, and Robert just swung side to side on the chair.

“I despised every second of it,” Robert frowned. Blazer’s smile dropped. That was the opposite of what she expected him to say. He caught her look and just waited for a few seconds before smiling. “Kidding. It wasn’t that bad.”

Blazer put down her pen and huffed at him. He kept going.

“You should play next time, y’know, considering you’re definitely a Princess Peach main.”

Blazer looked confused. She had no idea who that was, so she clicked on her laptop and typed it into the search bar. Robert could tell that it had loaded when she looked from her laptop screen to his face with a pathetic frown.

“Har har, very funny.” She rolled her eyes. Robert laughed.

Blazer couldn’t help but smile back. Maybe she *would* play next time.

End Notes

author is

fuck. i had a thought for this and i fucking forgot it. negative aura ig.

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